

The P L E A for
T O L E R A T I O N,

On Pretence of
Tenderness of Conscience,
Proved to be a C H E A T,
F R O M

The Practice and Prevarication of
some of the greatest Managers and
Sticklers for it.

In a L E T T E R
F R O M
A G E N T L E M A N in the Country,
T O
His F R I E N D a Citizen of *London*.

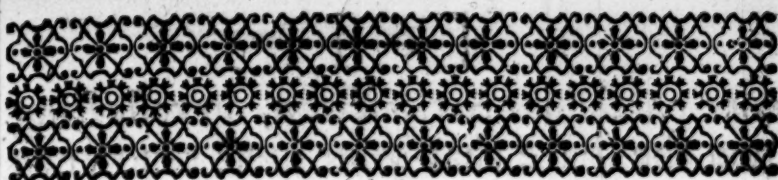
- L O N D O N,
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A
LETTER
FROM
A Gentleman in the Country,
TO
His Friend in *London*.

S I R,



Cannot but, with all good Men, who have at heart the true Interest of their Country, the Honour of our Most Gracious Sovereign, and the Prosperity of our Most Excellent Church, beg Leave to Congratulate you, upon that happy Turn of Affairs, which has of late, in all these respects, proved so very Advantageous and Favourable. I must confess, however, that I have a

more particular Satisfaction, in reflecting upon the share that your most renowned City hath had, in this truly happy Revolution : For such indeed it may very properly be stiled, and without Offence ; when those things which by Faction had been so much discomposed, and misplaced, are in great measure again reduced and restored into their proper Place and Order : so that good Designs are now not so much discouraged ; nor good Men, as has been too much the Custom, so frequently insulted, and with so great Petulance. It must, nevertheless, be acknowledged, that you are not yet entirely deliver'd of all kind of Annoyance, from the inveterate Rancour of the Party ; there are still some Remains of that corrupt Seed, which daily gives you some taste of its bitter Fruit ; that disturbs your Peace, and would keep you in a Perpetual War. The Wisdom and Vigilance of those who hold at this time the Government of the City, and the Courage and Loyalty of your Common-Council, will, we doubt not, in due time effect all that can be done by them, to give you Ease in this Matter, so far as they have sufficient Power in them-

themselves; and the Prudence and Interest of your most Worthy, because most Loyal, Representatives in the House of Commons, will be able to obtain for you all additional Supplies, where those Powers are wanting. It cannot be deny'd, but that altho' the Wisdom of the Nation hath already made some good Advances towards lessening the Craft and Artifices of Sedition in the State, and the growth of Schism in the Church; yet the Nature of the Things themselves, or the Perplexities arising out of the Irregularity of former Times, would not let them foresee or prevent many Inconveniences, which (it is not to be question'd) they have an Inclination to redress; and perhaps, e're long, may lay hold of an Opportunity to manifest the Effects of such Inclination. The Truth of this Observation, which, with due Submission, I acquaint you with, is evident from the Behaviour of some Men in Power amongst you, and who so continue, since the late *Act* that has been made relating to *Dissenters*. It is to be imagin'd, that the Intent of that *Act*, was design'd as a Relief to *truly* Scrupulous Consciences, or rather a kind of Con-

Connivance at, and Overlooking their Irregularity : It was furthermore design'd to exclude those from the Administration of Civil Offices, who were not true Members of the Ecclesiastic Body, or, as we usually say, true Sons of the Church. It is natural to suppose, that the great Council of the Nation could not but expect, that those who labour'd so hard to be Tolerated, by reason that their Consciences were of that tender Make, that could not Comply with the Establish'd Orders of the Church : I say, that Wise and Learned Body could not but very justly expect, that the Petitioners for *Toleration* should hence-forward content themselves to adhere to this Benefit, for which they had contended with so much Zeal, and shew themselves for ever Modest and Grateful to the Benefactors of so much Indulgence. It could not be conceived by that Wise and August Assembly, that their Indulgence should so soon be slighted, and the Plea of Tender Conscience so impudently prove itself an Imposture, and meer Cheat, in so short a Space of Time, and in so execrable a Manner; as hath been discovered by some Mens Practice, who

now

now come to Church, and who Prevaricate in it, with the same Hypocrisy, for which they were famous when out of it. Could our Wise Legislators have foreseen this Prevarication, if any Expedient could have been found, it doubtless had been inserted in some Clause, that would have set a Mark on such Men, and have incapacitated them for any Power to obstruct those good Things which they so ardently oppose, or effect those Mischiefs upon which their Minds are always bent. I know some will cry out at this, What, will you hinder Men from coming to Church? Will you not rather open your Arms to receive and embrace Converts? We ought, doubtless, to wish for a Multitude of Converts, to encourage all we can to come in to us; but to be sincere Converts, to be uniform and constant in their Conversion, we must discourage all Hypocrisy whatsoever, both within and without the Church. But seeing so solemn a Test as that of the Holy Sacrament will not deter some Men from the most sinful Prevarication, who seemingly Communicate with the Church, when their Hearts are with

its Enemies; it will be a very difficult matter to pitch upon any Method whereby to detect their Insincerity, and to prevent its Effects. For since they have this *Plea*, or *Pretence*, That they being satisfy'd of their Communicating with Safety, either with the Church, or with those of the Separation, it is not easie precisely to determine which Communion they prefer; since they alledge, They may comply, for present Convenience, with either: But yet not difficult to imagine, to conjecture, at least, to what Cause their Affection cleaves, by the Side they took, when their Choice was under less Restraint. And yet, perhaps, such a Test may still be found, as will not allow of so much Room for Subterfuge.

I will venture to give a Sketch of it; which, if any thing probable, may be fill'd up and colour'd by a better Hand.

I A. B. do solemnly here, in the Presence of God, Declare, That I sincerely Conform to the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England, as a most Pure Primitive Church, constituted according to the Word of God, under the holy Government of Bishops: That I hold myself in Communion with the said Church, as thinking it my indispensable Duty, and with Detestation of all manner of Heresy and Schism: That neither any Place, Profit, or Employment which I now possess, or which I might at any time hereafter expect, are the Ground of my present Compliance: That I will, to the utmost of my Power, do all Honour to the Establish'd Church, by Word and by Deed: That I renounce for ever, from this time, all Communion with Hereticks and Schismatics: That I will never hereafter, either openly or privately, in Deed, or Discourse, be aiding or favouring to them in their Opinions or Practices.

So help me, &c.

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If any thing can be able to comprehend the Men of Latitude, and bring us to any Certainty of their good Meaning towards us, it must be somewhat of this Nature. Nor ought such a Method to be thought severe: For if Men can so easily make a Jest of their Religion, and dispense with their pretended *Tenderness of Conscience*, as before observ'd; the Church has all the reason in the World to be in earnest to guard and defend itself against the Snares of such Hypocrisy; which even the Sincere among the *Dissenters*, if there be any such, must blow from them, as meer Chaff.

S I R, I cannot but believe, that a due and serious Consideration of these Things being neglected, a want of Thought, and Penetration into the Deceit and Depth of some Mens Designs, out of a mistaken Notion of Charity, which, according to the good-natur'd Genius of *Church of England Moderation*, has so long prevail'd, has been the unhappy Occasion of many Indecencies and Disorders; which a clearer and more distinct No-

tion

tion of Things, by which your most Glorious City is so well dispos'd and enlighten'd, will not more easily discover, than be heartily willing to redress. Among other Things, you will excuse the mentioning one, which, to me, hath for a long time, been no small Occasion of Surprize; The maintaining of Separate Meetings, under the very Roofs, and consequently under the seeming Protection of some of your greatest Companies. This Matter, surely, has not been so well consider'd as it ought; it had otherwise never been suffer'd. And the reason of this will appear, by Noting these Particulars :

1. That these Companies all subsist upon the Favour of the Crown, and therefore are to encourage no Opinions or Practices reflecting on the Honour of the Crown, in Matters appertaining either to Church or State : For this agrees not with the Character of good Subjects, or of a due Gratitude for the Royal Favours indulged to them in their several Charters.

2. In

2. In an Orthodox Christian Kingdom, all Societies Authoritatively constituted, and not merely connived at, ought to be Orthodox: It is therefore a Disgrace to any such Authoritatively constituted Orthodox Christian Society, to maintain within their Jurisdiction and Precincts, any Seminaries or Congregations of Schism. Is it not an affront to that Publick Authority from which they derive all their Privileges, as a Corporation? It is certainly very ill becoming them as Christians. Besides,

3dly, That which is only Tolerated, does by this means seem to Shelter it self under an Umbrage of Authority. From which these two Inconveniencies follow:

First, That from hence proceeds this kind of Absurdity and Indecence, that whereas Men whose Irregularities are connived at, if they have any Modesty, retire out of the Presence of that Superior Power that overlooks their Disorders, when they Indulge the Practice of them.

them. These, with open Impudence and Defiance of that Power, which favours them only by connivance, presume to A& their Irregularities in the very Face of Authority, and to upbraid its indulgent oversight, with the name and pretence of Approbation. This is plain, when a *Conventicle* is Licensed in the Hall of any *Company*, contrary to the Royal Favour intended in the Charter of any such *Company*: For to suppose otherwise, were to suppose a Prince would give a Liberty to Erect a certain Number of Forts and Receptacles within the Heart of the Kingdom, from whence his Foes might issue upon any Occasion, that favour'd their desire of Novelty and Rebellion, to Annoy him, and his Loyal Subjects. There is nothing forced in this Similitude; but it will hold much stronger, if herein not only the Royal Cause, but that of the Almighty is consider'd. When a Meeting is maintain'd in a Hall almost next Door to a Church, nearly adjoining to the House of that God, who is an Enemy to Confusion and Disorder, and has denounced the Sentence of certain Damnation to all who abet Schism.

But

But *Secondly*, These further Inconveniences are hereby promoted; These Meetings being placed and encouraged in the Heart of the City, the Faction, not with the Modesty of a Sect only Tolerated, and Connived at, do, out of a Sanctified Emulation, come in Triumph with their Ten or Twelve Coaches; and I could tell where they even obstruct a Passage to the Church. Hereby the *Dissenters* are invited to Place themselves near these Assemblies, and to reap those Advantages of Trade, by which they pretend, at least, to arrive at those Riches, with which they boast of their Strength and Interest to overturn the Church, or to make their Party equally consider'd. Hence many weak and ignorant People have been led into an indifferent or unkind Opinion of the Church in such Places, or more favourable to the Schism: And such of the Clergy as were Faithful, have not only suffer'd by the lessening of their Esteem in such Parishes, but in the Diminution of their Just Perquisites and Revenues, by the intrusion of Interlopers, and other Irregularities: A thing that is not so easily

easily overlook'd by any Set of Men, not acquainted with the *Moderation*; I should have said, not tinctured with the *Remissness* of Church of England *Indifference*. But I hope She is now awakened out of Her Lethargy, by the Influences, and Encouragement lately given Her, by the best and greatest Part of your most Illustrious City, who know now their real Strength, and as worthily exert themselves. If any Hints I have given them, may animate and be of use to them in their future good Designs, you will the more easily excuse this trouble, as I shall have abundant cause to rejoyce, in pleasing you, in shewing my Respect to your great City, in that I can any way serve Religion, and the Publick Weal.

C P O S T.

POSTSCRIPT.

IT may not be amiss to send you a Scheme of such Persons as may be obliged, by the Test, herein Enclos'd, viz.

All Superior Magistrates, in Counties, Cities and Corporations.

All Inferior Magistrates and Officers in the same.

Every Master, Warden and Freeman of any Company.

Every Common-Council Man, Church-Warden, or other Officer, or Vestry-Man in any Parish; by which means a better understanding might usually be kept up between the Minister and his Parishioners, and between the Parishioners themselves, whilst they would more readily unite in all things, for the Honour of the Church and Parish; and be less liable to be tempted by the Suggestions of those busie Sectaries in our Parish-Meetings, which are too often the Cause of Division and Tumult.

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It will be Objected, That if the taking this *Test* shall be made necessary for every Freeman of a Company, it will oblige him to this Hardship; That he must either take the Oath, or be made incapable to get a Livelihood.

To mitigate this Hardship, the Matter may be thus explained; That he shall be permitted the Freedom of Trade, but not of Government: That is, He may be allowed the Liberty of Commerce and Traffick as much as any other Freeman of the Company, but not be Priviledg'd to meddle in the Affairs or Government of the Company, or give a Vote in any thing that may concern a Freeman of the Company, as he is a Member either of the Body Politick, or as a Son of the Church. And for these Reasons more-especially: Because, The Constitution of the *English* Government, being (to use the Observation of a very Wise and Learned Person, Sir Henry Spelman, a good Judge, as well as great Friend to our Constitution) likened to an Arch, the two Sides of which represent, the one the Civil Government,

vernment, the other the Government of
the Church.

1. The Dissenters, in their Judgment relating to Civil Matters, are Republicans; and so cannot concur heartily in anything of good Importance to the Politick Constitution of England, which is the one Side of the Arch, that is founded in Monarchy.

2. In their Judgment relating to Church Matters, they are Schismaticks and Latitudinarians; so cannot contribute anything to that Unity in which the Ecclesiastick Side of the Arch of our English Constitution is cemented to the Politick, and upon which the Strength of the whole Constitution does entirely rest, and is supported. The Ecclesiastick Side of the Arch, is that which is founded in Episcopacy. So that,

As to the First of these Capacities, in their Choice of	Magistrates, Governors, Wardens, Assistants, Officers, &c.	They would be apt to favour Republicans, & Men little affected towards Monarchy.
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In their Other Capacity, in their Choice of

{ Rectors of
Parishes in
their Ad-
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Governors
or Masters
of Hospitals,
Lecturers,
School-Ma-
sters, &c.

{ They would
encline to
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Dissenters
and *Schif-*
matics, or
Favourers
of *Dissent-*
ers & Schif-
matics,
and such as
are no true
Friends to
Episcopacy.

By which the Strength and Beauty of this noble Fabrick might be much endanger'd and impair'd, if not reduced to an Heap of Ruines: Whereas by the improved Strength, and growing Firmness, which now appears in the more strict Union of our *Ecclesiastick* and *Civil* Interests, we hope it will stand Firm, as a *Triumphal Arch*, and as a Lasting Monument of the Honour and Happiness of these Kingdoms, to all succeeding Generations.

I will add but one thing more.

You will be apt to say, That the Honest Gentlemen of the several Companies,

panies, taking the Premisses into Consideration, out of a truly Wise and Religious Intent, may probably demand,

1. How they shall be able to atone for that Sacrilege they may seem to have been guilty of, in suffering *Schismatics* and *Hereticks* to share in their Inheritance, to the defrauding the Church of its just Rights, and supporting its Enemies and Underminers.

2. How they may be put into a Legal Capacity of making such Atonement.

With regard to the First; It were adviseable to set apart some Portion of the Annual Revenue received for the Rent of such *Conventicles*, as have been Let out by any Company, as a *Deodand* or Offering made to God, to be apply'd to the Use of the Minister of the Parish, which might appease the Wrath of God, for former Misapplication: The other Part of that Revenue might be appointed for Satisfaction of those *Dissenting Teachers*, or *Congregations*, for the Space of Time for which they have Contracted with them.

In

In looking forward, it might be well consider'd, To convert those Houses, formerly dedicated to Schism; to the Honour and Service of God, by turning each of them into a Mansion-House for the Minister of the Parish, or adding it to the Encrease of his Revenue; which might lay a Foundation of future Blessings to the Company.

The Way to have all this Legally accomplished, is, by Addressing to the Legislature of the Nation. Nor need you fear Success in such Addresses, who have such Religious, such Wise, such Worthy Representatives.

F I N I S.



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